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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the formal and informal links between schools, further education (FE) colleges, and education authorities (EAs) in the planning and provision of education in upper secondary schools and FE colleges in Scotland. The concern was that conflicting or destructive competitive relationships between FE colleges, schools, and regional councils in their role as EAs would arise as a result of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act of 1992, which removed FE colleges from EA control. Findings showed a great deal of close cooperation between schools and FE colleges with little evidence of competition. Relationships between schools and colleges appeared to be based on cooperation and collaboration. At least 4 of 12 EAs had formal committees composed of college principals, members of the EA directorate, and secondary school head teachers. All other EAs had forums where these individuals could exchange ideas. The main cause of friction between FE colleges and EAs was the administration of financial aid for students taking nonadvanced FE. The majority of strategic issues affecting the postcompulsory age group were curricular; achieving curricular coherence and providing for smooth transitions from school to college were most frequently mentioned. (Contains 21 references.) (YLB)

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Current relationships between Colleges, Schools & Education Authorities

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Ian Finlay

Bridges or Battlements?

Current relationships between Colleges, Schools and Education Authorities

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*The **Joseph Rowntree Foundation** has supported this project as part of its programme of research and innovative development projects, which it hopes will be of value to policy makers and practitioners. The facts presented and views expressed in this report however, are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Foundation.*

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The responsibility for the conduct of the project and the report is mine.

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Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
1. Executive Summary	2
2. Policy Background	4
3. Changing Links between Colleges, Schools and Councils	10
4. Emerging Relationships	14
Summary of the Data	14
Representation on College Boards of Management	15
Forums for maintaining links	16
Main Strategic Issues	18
Impact of Local Government Reorganisation	18
5. Case Studies	20
Case Study 1 - Falkirk College	20
Case Study 2 - Tayside Region	22
6. Conclusions	25
7. References	27

Introduction

This project arose out of a concern that conflictual or destructive competitive relationships between further education colleges, schools and regional or island councils in their role as education authorities would arise as a result of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992. This Act removed further education colleges from education authority control and placed them under the operational control of individual college Boards of Management.

The majority of schools in Scotland remain under the control of education authorities. There is therefore some potential for conflictual competition since there is an overlap in the client groups for the upper secondary school and further education colleges.

Other legislation and government initiatives that potentially may affect the relationship between further education colleges, schools, and education authorities are the reorganisation of local government in Scotland as a result of the Local government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, and the Higher Still proposals which aim to reform the post sixteen curriculum in Scotland. The former increases the number of education authorities in Scotland from 12 to 32. The Higher Still proposals require cooperation between schools and college if they are to be fully effective.

The main aims of the research were to:

1. investigate both the formal and informal links between schools, further education colleges and education authorities in the planning and provision of education in upper secondary schools and in further education colleges;

2. present an analysis of the effects of recent legislation on these links;

3. report on the benefits gained, and the difficulties being experienced;

4. write up case studies of successful practice;

5. provide information to policy makers on the effects of legislation;

6. highlight areas for action by policy makers.

1. Executive Summary

The findings are summarised below;

- There was a great deal of evidence of close cooperation between schools and further education colleges. There was little evidence of competition. Relationships between schools and colleges appear to be based on cooperation and collaboration. The worst that was found was indifference by some schools to the work of their local college. Several respondents from secondary schools felt that their relationship with their local further education college has improved since incorporation.

- Whilst there was a general feeling that the relationship between colleges and the education authorities had weakened, they still talk to each other. In at least four of the twelve education authorities there are formal committees comprising college principals, members of the education authority directorate and secondary school head teachers. These committees have been set up to discuss issues of common interest. In all the other education authorities there were forums where college principals, secondary head teachers and education authority officials could exchange ideas, generally on specific initiatives.

- The main issue causing friction between further education colleges and education authorities is the administration of bursaries for students undertaking non advanced further education.

- The majority of strategic issues affecting the post compulsory age group were curricular. They were concerned with specific initiatives such as Higher Still, General Scottish vocational Qualifications (GSVQs) or school based access courses Achieving curricular coherence and providing for smooth transitions from school to college were most frequently mentioned.

- The impact of local government reform was seen as having a range of possible outcomes. On the positive side, some respondents felt that there could be a closer link between the college and the authority since their client groups would coincide. On the negative side it was felt that certain initiatives could be lost since they would require an authority of a certain size to be able to carry them out. There was concern over the future of bursary provision and over the provision of specialist advisory services by small authorities.

This research has shown that the relationships between schools and colleges are good. There is no evidence of them being in conflict or in direct competition. The focus of the relationship appears to be on cooperating to provide a broader curricular choice for young people and easier progression from one sector to the other. There appears to be an understanding in both schools and colleges that, for sixteen to eighteen year olds, the main providers are the secondary schools. Colleges seem to be quite happy to accept those pupils in this age group for whom school is not attractive and to assist schools in providing educational experiences for school based pupils for which they are better equipped than the schools. This augurs well for the future of major initiatives such as Higher Still.

The relationships between colleges and the regional councils is also free from suspicion and conflict although, in most areas, is not as strong as the relationship colleges have with schools. This is understandable as, in the early years of their freedom from local authority operational control, colleges are keen to assert their independence. However, evidence from some areas indicates that

good working relationships, focusing on the educational needs of the community, can be established with colleges, schools and education authorities working in partnership.

The issue of local authority administered bursaries is one that needs to be addressed by central government. It is the single issue that causes most friction between colleges and education authorities. At a time when education and training are so central in our economic and industrial development strategy, perhaps consideration needs to be given to demand led rather than cash limited funding for students on vocational courses.

2. Policy Background

This project covers the secondary school, further education, and local authority interface. Policy relating to all three of these institutions is relevant. The main recent legislation and policy papers are the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Act 1989, the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, Higher Still (1994), The Structure of Local Government in Scotland; The case for change; Principles of the new system (1991), and The Structure of Local Government in Scotland: Shaping the new councils (1992). The latter two documents informed the framing of the Local government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994. Relevant provisions of each of these documents are outlined below.

The Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Act received royal assent in 1989. Its main aim was to provide a mechanism for schools to 'opt out' of education authority control and become self-governing and financed by a direct grant from the Scottish Office Education Department. In fact these provisions have only been taken up by one secondary school in Scotland to date, five years after the legislation was enacted. There is one further school that is centrally funded but it is an historical anomaly and was in that position before the 1989 legislation. This is in contrast to over 1000 schools in England and Wales that have attained grant maintained status. Normally one would expect a 1:10 ratio comparing Scotland with England & Wales. Thus the Self-Governing Schools part of the 1989 Act has failed to make much impression on Scottish education. In contrast, however, the 'etc.' has made a big impact on the management of further education colleges and has been superseded by legislation which took the process started in the 1989 Act even further.

The etc. part of the 1989 Act required Education Authorities to provide schemes of delegation of powers for the provision of further education to individual colleges. FE colleges were to be managed by College Councils with increased powers. More than half of the members of the new college councils were to represent employer interests. The new college councils were formed in August 1990 and took on their full powers in January 1991. Only three months later on 21 March 1991 the Secretary of State for Scotland announced to parliament that, as part of a review of local government in Scotland, FE colleges were to be taken out of local authority control and be funded by the Government. This announcement was made the day after the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the abolition of the community charge (poll tax). There were clear views expressed at the time, both in parliament and in the press that there was little educational justification for the removal of FE colleges from education authority control and that the moves were made to help to remove £200 million from regional council expenditure and thus allow a reduction in local taxation. Mr. Tony Worthington, MP for Clydebank and Milngavie, stated in the House of Commons, in response to the Secretary of State's statement 'The proposed measures have nothing to do with further education. They have arisen out of the poll tax panic and the need to move more services to centralised control."[1]. The leader in The Times Educational Supplement Scotland the following week was titled 'The search for a Scots solution to the poll tax.'[2]. In fact, although the timing of the change probably owed much to the issue of replacement of the poll tax, the changes proposed were consistent with the long term direction of government education policy.

The announcement was followed two months later with an educational justification of the changes in a white paper titled 'Access and Opportunity' published by The Scottish Office. The total justification for the change in college management is contained in one sentence. 'Although these new powers [conferred in the 1989 Act , see above] are substantial, colleges still do not have sufficient freedom to innovate and respond quickly to the needs of their customers.'[3] It is difficult to know on the basis of what evidence this statement was made since the colleges had only had delegated powers from education authorities for less than an academic year. A research report,

commissioned by the Scottish Office Education Department on the effectiveness of the new college councils was not published until December 1991. This was nine months after it was announced that the 'new' college councils were to be replaced and seven months after the publication of 'Access and Opportunity'. Thus it appears that expediency took precedence over evaluation.

Almost as soon as the minister made his announcement to remove FE colleges from local authority control, concerns were expressed about the effects of that change on other aspects of education authority work. Frank Pignatelli, director of education at Strathclyde was reported in The Glasgow Herald as being concerned about the loss of democratic control and community involvement. He foresaw the region's attempts to forge closer links with schools to encourage pupils to take college courses running into difficulties because of new arrangements[4].

During the committee stages of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Bill a number of opposition Members of Parliament expressed concerns both about links between school and college education and about the role of the local authority. Tony Worthington stated 'It is impossible to determine further education as distinct from community or secondary education. There is no problem when the same authority provides it. It can take account of geography, local circumstances and so on; it can have strategic vision.... But if there are two distinct funding bodies, we shall land in quagmires.'[5]. Mr. Ernie Ross, MP for Dundee West asked the minister to ensure that the new college boards of management collaborated with their local authorities. The minister, Mr. Michael Forsyth, agreed to table an amendment to the Bill which would require boards to consult with other providers of education at both secondary and higher levels. Thus before the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act was passed by parliament, there was concern about strategic planning issues and the effects the legislation would have on the interface between schools and colleges.

The most recent policy document which affects the interface between schools and colleges is Higher Still, published in March 1994. On the positive side, this document attempts to get rid of the academic/vocational divide in post sixteen secondary education in Scotland. It will, however require coordination between schools and colleges if it to be successfully implemented. This is recognised in the document itself. 'FE colleges have an important role to play in implementing the new system, whether independently or in partnership with schools.'[6]. Tom Burness, a college principal, recognised that partnerships with schools will be required if Higher Still proposals are to be successfully implemented. He wrote in an article in Broadcast 'If Higher Still is successfully developed and implemented, and a more attractive curriculum is available to S5 students, it is almost certain that more young people will choose to remain in school for S5 and increasingly S6 including a number who would otherwise have gone into Youth Training and others who would have joined a college full-time programme. That makes the argument for sensible school/college partnerships all the stronger.'[7] As I write this report there are concerns being expressed in the Times Educational Supplement Scotland about the ability of schools and colleges to work together to implement Higher Still.

The need for co-operation between schools and colleges does not appear to sit easily with the government's philosophy of a competitive market place. One English FE principal referring to this issue is quoted in the Times Educational Supplement as saying 'The whole thrust of the FHE Act is intended to put us at each others throats.' [8] Another principal is quoted in the same article saying 'I see quite big problems in competition with local schools. The local authority has always seen FE and school as part of their responsibility and therefore they have not wanted to set one against the other.' He did not see the same spirit of co-operation continuing after the act came into force. His fears may be justified, given the report in Times Educational Supplement in September 1994 which alleged that schools are taking unfair and possibly illegal measures to retain 16 to 18 year

old pupils.

The changes in the education system have been parallelled by proposed changes in the structure of local government in Scotland. Documents relating to these changes give clear indications of the Government's view of the role of local authorities and the locus of local authorities in the administration of education. the following quotations are all taken from *The Structure of Local Government in Scotland: The case for change: Principles of the new system The Scottish Office (1991)*[9]...

"...Government policies are now designed:

* to increase the choices open to the consumer of local authority services;
* to give the consumer a greater role in determining how these services should be delivered;
* to encourage authorities to consider alternative methods of service delivery; and
* to work in partnerships with the public and private sectors as well as with individuals. " *p8*

"The creation of school boards, the option of self-governing status for schools...- all of these have had a major impact on local authority services. They have changed the way in which local authorities discharge their statutory functions and the way in which they organise themselves administratively. The emphasis now is increasingly on the enabling role of local government, rather than on direct service provision." *p8*

"Over the period authorities have needed increasingly to establish a complex network of external links..." *p8*

"The Secretary of State announced in the House of Commons on 21 March his proposal to introduce legislation to transfer to the Government from education authorities the responsibility for funding all further education colleges offering full time education... The enactment of legislation to allow schools to become self-governing points to another possible change in the discharge of the educational function." *p11*

A later document [10] made the following additional points:

"However, no action stemming from the Government's consideration of this issue [increased duties of school boards] will remove education authorities' statutory responsibility for ensuring the provision of education in their areas, and education authorities will continue to provide, or arrange for the provision of, a wide range of support services for schools, their staff and their pupils.

The Government are also committed to the principle of self-governing schools in Scotland and have encouraged primary and secondary schools to apply for self-governing status. Schools granted such status will no longer be the responsibility of education authorities; the greater number of schools in an education authority's area to be granted self-governing status, the greater the reduction in the scale of application of that authority's functions.

The changing role of education authorities in further education, and under such devolved school management arrangements as may be determined, taken together with the potential developments flowing from the promotion of self-governing status for schools, are important background factors in any consideration of the place of education in the new local government structure.' *p31*

The elections for the new local authorities were held earlier this year. They will work in parallel

with existing local authorities for one year after which they will take on full responsibility for the administration of local government in Scotland. Up until now, regional and island councils, in their role as education authorities, have been required to convene an education committee and to appoint a director of education. This is no longer required by legislation. This has caused some fears that the strategic planning of education will be further undermined. However, judging from advertisements and announcements in the educational press most authorities are remaining consistent to recent practice and are appointing directors of education.

In summary, the government has removed further education colleges from education authority control; it has paved the legislative path for schools to gain self-governing status and would like to see a greater take up of this opportunity; and it foresees local authorities as having a different role from that they had in the past with more emphasis on enabling rather than provision and operating through links or partnerships rather than control.

It may be worthwhile at this stage to provide a view of the government's ideological position with respect to education for this age group.

'It was always a fiction that educational decisions are taken on educational grounds'[11] This was the opening sentence of the TESS leader column immediately after the announcement, by Secretary of State, Ian Lang, that further education colleges were to be removed from local authority control. It underlines the fact that education is not isolated from the social, political and economic environment in which it operates. Government policy on education draws on a variety of sources. Two major sources of policy are the ideology of the ruling political elite and the need of the government to meet immediate economic or political exigencies. Political parties seeking election to government set out their priorities based on a clear and usually uniform set of principles. Governments must meet the immediate needs of running the system which sometimes means that political philosophy must be tempered by pragmatic considerations. Politics is the art of the possible.

Ideology is used in this context to mean a system of interpretation or belief held by a particular group, in this case a political party. Ideology is often difficult to determine. It is rarely explicitly stated. In the case of governments, it must be inferred from both rhetoric and action. A further difficulty is that even within a single political party there are often competing ideologies. Thus there was the long running debate between the wets and drys in the Conservative Party during the 1980s. In the following paragraphs, an attempt will be made to tease out some of the dominant ideological themes which underpin recent education policy.

One relatively clear ideological position which has been adopted is the economic instrumentalist view of the function of education. This is the view that the primary function of the education system is to serve the economic needs of the nation. 'Access and Opportunity' starts with the sentence 'In a modern economy the creation of wealth depends crucially on having a well-trained and educated workforce'. In the foreword, the Prime Minister states that 'The Scottish economy has been transformed by our policies to develop a more broadly based industrial base.....We need to build on these achievements continuing to raise standards and involving still more people in education and training.' In a written parliamentary answer, Ian Lang stated 'Raising skills levels of the work force and of those qualifying with relevant and worthwhile qualifications is necessary if we are to match the skill of our economic competitors.'[12]. Ten years ago the Scottish Education Department identified as one of the failings of the vocational education and training system that 'many courses need to be updated to take account of new technology or the changing requirements of employers.'[13].

This clear emphasis on vocationalism has not gone unchallenged. Mervyn Rolfe, education

convener in Tayside said, referring to the Secretary of State's announcement to remove further education colleges from local authority control, "the first casualty will be academic studies. The Secretary of State's comments implied that further education colleges are more about training than education. The second casualty will be 'further' education."[14]

The debate between those who hold an economic instrumentalist viewpoint and those with a liberal-humanist point of view is not a new one nor has it been conducted solely in the United Kingdom. A series of debates took place between John Dewey, a liberal humanist, and Prosser and Sneddon, the social efficiency theorists between 1900 and 1914 in the United States of America. The arguments will seem familiar to anyone who has followed recent debates in the United Kingdom between the 'new vocationalists' and the 'new educationalists'. The predominant ideology or set of values of the ruling elite is important in influencing the structure of administration of the education system. Thus Ranson and Travers state '...our argument sets out a model which proposes that there is an organic relationship between the structure of government and the dominant values of a policy sector.'[15]. They point out that economic instrumentalism has been a policy ideal of both major British political parties. 'By the late 1970s..both Labour and Conservative administrations were concerned to emphasise the economic functions of education and the needs of employers.' [16]. They further suggest that an adjunct of an economic instrumentalist value system (demonstrated in Britain in the 1980s as new vocationalism) is a centralised administration system. Liberal humanist value systems (the new education) tend to lead to decentralised services.

This debate on values needs to be set in a Scottish context in which consensus and seeking the middle ground have always been the preferred method of progress on educational matters. This is helped by the fact that the policy makers and the practitioners are well known to each other and do tend to communicate regularly on current issues.

Closely tied to the view that education should serve economic needs, is the view that commercial and industrial employers should have a key involvement in the curriculum and the management of schools and colleges. The Association of County Councils cited 'increasing employer influence' as a key trend in English education[17]. They point to the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, the formation of Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), and increased employer representation on the governing boards of colleges as examples of this trend. In Scotland, Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) have an even wider role than their English counterparts encompassing economic development as well as education and training.

In a written answer to a parliamentary question in May 1991, the Secretary of State for Scotland stated, 'An important theme of the Government's education and training priorities has been the need to foster close links between employers and the education system.' [18] The Scottish Office states that 'Following recent legislation, further education colleges have been reformed to make them even more responsive to their customers in industry and commerce. New college councils were established in August 1990 of which at least half the members are employers - thereby giving employers as the ultimate consumers of vocational education and training a major role in the planning and operation of the colleges.'[19]

Not only does the government have a strong belief in the need for employer involvement in education, but they also appear to believe that educational institutions should operate in a similar environment as business. Again the Association of County Councils cited 'increasing emphasis on markets and competition' as a trend.[20]

In summary, the major ideological standpoint behind current policy in education is the economic instrumentalist approach along with a philosophy extolling the virtues of employer involvement in

education and the operation of schools and colleges in an environment as close to that faced by businesses as is possible for a public service, in other words a competitive, market driven environment.

The ideology cited above has informed policy making in both England & Wales and in Scotland although the actual legislation and the outcomes have differed. Given this legislation and what can be inferred about the ideological standpoint upon which it is based, one fear that prompted this investigation was that the relationships between schools and colleges would be soured by harsh competitive stances adopted by school and college managements. Whilst recent press reports would suggest that in some areas of England and Wales relations have become strained with schools allegedly restricting pupil access to information about college opportunities, an analysis of the data collected for this study suggests that relations between schools and further education colleges in Scotland have not deteriorated and in many instances have become stronger.

3. Changing Links between Colleges, Schools and Councils

The boundaries between colleges and schools, and between colleges and education authorities have changed over the past fifteen years. Up until the late 1970s there was little overlap in the missions of further education colleges and secondary schools. Their ways of operating differed in three important aspects until relatively recently.

During the 1960s and 1970s, further education colleges expanded rapidly by providing part time vocational education. This was largely to young, male apprentices. One college in the greater Glasgow area reports that in the late 1960s it was training 4000 engineering apprentices from one firm on day release courses. Colleges also offered commercial, administrative and secretarial courses again generally on a part time day or evening basis although some of these courses also were delivered on a full time basis. Some colleges also offered Scottish Certificate of Education courses at both ordinary and higher grades in both part time and full time modes of attendance. Schools, during this period, had no part time pupils. Thus in patterns of delivery further education colleges differed significantly from secondary schools.

Up until the introduction of National Certificate modules in 1984, the curricula in the two types of institution were also quite different. Further education colleges offered national certificates, higher national certificates and higher national diplomas in both business and technical subjects. They also offered a wide range of specialist qualifications certificated by national and, in some cases international, examining bodies and professional institutes. Secondary schools offered SCE ordinary and higher grades courses and also the certificate of sixth year studies. Some colleges also offered these latter courses and a few built a very high reputation doing so but they were not in direct competition with the schools since they were usually taken up by those beyond school age. Both colleges and some secondary schools offered evening leisure courses. Thus in the area of the curriculum there was little overlap between schools and colleges.

Colleges in Scotland have always had a different age profile from their counterparts in England and Wales. Further education colleges were never seen as a major alternative to school for 16 and 17 year olds taking academic qualifications. As mentioned above highers and O grades were offered by colleges but were usually taken up by school leavers as a second attempt or by adults returning to education. The 16 and 17 year olds in college were normally those who had left school to take up employment and were attending college on a day release basis or else were sitting vocational qualifications unavailable at school. Thus secondary schools in Scotland contained all the population from 12 to 16 and those 17 and 18 year olds who were staying on. Colleges were almost completely populated by school leavers. The exceptional group were those on Link courses who attended both school and college, the latter usually for one or two afternoons per week.

Since the early 1980s there have been a number of factors which have resulted in changes to the relatively clear boundaries described above. The introduction of the National Certificate framework in 1984 provided schools with an appropriate curriculum for those pupils who neither wanted, nor gained much from, traditional academic courses. Since the courses were modular, they could be taught and assessed in one term. This allowed schools to provide an appropriate curriculum, with nationally accredited certification for the Christmas leavers - pupils who had to complete at least one term in fifth year in order to comply with the regulations on school leaving age. It also allowed schools to provide a vocationally relevant enhancement for pupils undertaking three or four Highers.

This vocational relevance became even more important with the introduction of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI). Regional TVEI coordinators quickly realised that they could meet the requirements for accessing TVEI funding by enhancing the curriculum using national certificate modules. Permission was sought and given to allow pupils in third and fourth years, 14 and 15 year olds, to undertake certain modules as part of their TVEI experience. Thus in the area of curriculum, a major divide between schools and colleges was broken. In both colleges and in many schools national certificate modules now form a significant part of curriculum.

Several social and economic factors combined to influence the age structures in both schools and colleges. The two major economic recessions of the last fifteen years combined with an increased cohort of sixteen year olds resulted in fewer job opportunities for those wishing to leave school at sixteen. Thus young people were pushed out of the labour market. Simultaneously the curricular changes outlined above made staying on at school more attractive for 16 and 17 year olds. The relative importance of these push and pull features is not known. What is clear is that an increasing number of 16 and 17 year olds have been staying on at school in Scotland.

Regional Councils, as education authorities, are generally reluctant to close secondary schools. The recessions described above increased the demand among adults to return to education. Several of the regional councils encouraged adults to return to secondary school to take standard grades (the replacement for O grades) and highers. They made this an attractive alternative to further education colleges by waiving fees for adult returners in order to attract adults into threatened secondary schools.

The same recession greatly reduced the numbers of day release students coming into colleges. To compensate for this and to retain staff jobs and their own levels of activity, colleges increased the number of full time courses on offer. These courses were readily taken up by people either made redundant or who saw little prospect of employment without recognised vocational qualifications.

Thus in terms of the curricula delivered, the age range of the learners catered for, and in the modes of attendance secondary and further education have seen converging developments. Where once there was little overlap between the curricula of secondary and further education now National Certificate modules and higher grades are accepted features of both types of institution. Adults in secondary schools and 15/16 year olds in further education had in the 1980s become an accepted and legitimate part of the student bodies. Both types of institution cater for both part time and full time attendance modes.

At a time when the client groups and the curricula of secondary schools and further education colleges would appear to require more local liaison and planning, the institutional means of providing this strategic level of coordination have been changed as a result of government legislation.

Further education is a relative newcomer to the educational scene. Although some of the activities that go on in further education colleges can be traced back to the mechanics' or working mens' institutes of the nineteenth century, further education in Scotland did not receive legislative recognition until the Education (Scotland) Act 1946. This provided education authorities with the power to provide further education in accordance with their needs. Since the authorities defined their own needs, their was no great compulsion on them to do very much. The great expansion in the provision of further education through purpose built colleges came during the 1960s and 70s. Most of the buildings now occupied by further education colleges were built during this period.

With local government reorganisation taking place in Scotland in 1974 the responsibility for providing further education and for operating the colleges fell to the nine mainland Regional Councils

and the three multi purpose Island Councils. These twelve bodies acted as education authorities. They were required to convene an education committee and to appoint a director of education. The larger authorities all convened a further education sub committee and appointed a depute or assistant director responsible for further education.

The main strength of this system was that it met, in theory, the requirements of democratic representation. Elected regional or island councillors, with the assistance of their officials, identified the needs of the communities for which they were responsible and translated these needs into further education services provided by the colleges for which they were also responsible. Several very innovative initiatives, tackling the needs of disadvantaged groups, arose through these processes.

The main weaknesses of the system arose from the administrative and financial inefficiencies that were a feature of many aspects of local authority provision. Colleges were unable to vire from one budget head to another even within their revenue budgets. Colleges were also unable to carry funds over from one financial year to another. This led to the annual January or February spending sprees as unused funds were quickly committed so that they would not be forfeited. Colleges also frequently found it difficult to appoint new administrative staff. As result, highly qualified and experienced teaching staff were 'promoted' to take up what amounted to clerical duties.

Some of the weaknesses described above were addressed by the Self-Governing etc. (Scotland) Act 1989. This required local authorities to draw up schemes of delegation for further education. Single line budgets with the possibility of budget carry over from one financial year to another and greater control over other administrative arrangements formed part of the schemes of delegation.

The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 removed from education authorities the statutory duty to provide further education and vested this responsibility in the Secretary of State for Scotland. As a result of this legislation from April 1 1993, further education colleges in Scotland have been funded directly by the Scottish Office Education Department (SOED). In Scotland funding is provided to colleges through a branch of the SOED known as the Further Education Funding Unit. In Scotland both advanced and non advanced further education are funded through the SOED's funding unit. Colleges do not receive their income for higher level work from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. This is in contrast to the arrangements south of the border where colleges are funded by the Further Education Funding Council for their non advanced work and the Higher Education Funding council for the higher education that they provide. These two councils are set up at arms length from the government and have powers of quality control as well as funding.

Further education colleges are now bodies corporate with a board of management largely appointed initially by the Secretary of State for Scotland. As bodies corporate, colleges have a legal existence which is separate from both local authorities and from central government. They are able to undertake contracts on their own account. They are also subject to legal proceedings or orders which can be taken out against them. Thus this new status offers colleges more opportunities but also carries with it more responsibilities.

Boards of Management comprise no less than 10 and no more than 16 members. At least half of the membership must be drawn from those who 'have experience of...industrial, commercial or employment matters or the practice of any profession' . The college principal, an elected representative of both teaching and non-teaching staff and a student representative are also members of the board. The remaining members of the board are drawn from those with an interest in the work of the college. Some boards of management include a member of the regional council education committee or a local school head teacher, others do not.

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In Scotland there are no sixth form colleges or tertiary colleges. Six year comprehensive schools are the norm. Although the 1992 Act removed from education authorities the duty to provide further education, it left them with the ability to provide further education. Education authorities retain the discretion to provide bursaries for students in non advanced further education. The responsibility for providing grants for those in advanced further education lies with the SOED. From 1 April 1996 the 32 new unitary authorities will replace the existing twelve education authorities. They will have responsibility for schools, and community and adult education.

It is in the above context that this research was undertaken.

4. Emerging Relationships

The legislative changes outlined above have meant that both colleges and local authorities are having to reassess and redefine their relationships. Colleges are also having to redefine their relationships with local secondary schools which are still under the control of the local authorities. This project attempted to examine the effects of recent legislation on these relationships.

Summary of the Data

- Elected members of regional councils have representation on 24 boards of management of the 41 colleges that responded. Regional council officials are represented on 5 boards and secondary school head teachers are members of 22 boards. 12 boards have both regional council and head teacher member.

- Most regions (or divisions of Strathclyde) appear to have either standing or ad hoc committees which comprise members from schools, FE colleges and council officials or members. In some regions these committees have a wide strategic remit for the planning and coordination of post compulsory education. Examples of such committees exist in Tayside, Grampian, Fife and Lanark. In other regions such committees have fairly specific and limited remits. These may include responsibility for education business partnerships, TVEI coordination, curriculum coordination, European funding application coordination, and coordinating aspects of the role of education in local economic development. Examples of each of these were identified.

- 33 college principals had fewer meetings now with regional directorates than prior to incorporation. 6 principals had meetings with the same frequency. No principal reported an increased number of meetings.

- 27 principals reported that the frequency of meetings with head teachers remained the same whilst 3 reported an increased number of meetings and 9 reported fewer meetings.

- 28 principals reported that their links with the regional council had weakened, 2 reported that it had strengthened and 8 reported no change. There were also comments to the effect that the relationship was now more one between equals and that the weakening was to the detriment of neither party and was not necessarily "worse".

- 10 principals reported that they now had stronger links with schools, 6 reported weaker links and 23 reported no change.

- The most important strategic issue concerning both college principals and regional officials was the curriculum. Achieving curricular coherence and providing for smooth transitions from school to college were most often mentioned. Higher Still, GSVQs, Records of Achievement and school based access courses were all mentioned under this heading. The personal funding of students through bursaries was also seen to be an important issue. This is the issue that causes the most friction between colleges and the regions. Other strategic issues mentioned usually by only one respondent were; keeping students in the region, achieving a balance between education and training and the impact of Skillseekers, adults in schools, reorganisation of the careers service, reinteresting employers in further education, and encouraging evening class enrolments.

- The impact of local government reorganisation was seen as having a range of possible

outcomes from negative consequences through no change to some possible positive outcomes. On the positive side, some respondents felt that there could be a closer link between the college and authority since the client groups would coincide. In one case it was felt that the colleges would become more important in driving the links with schools. On the negative side, it was felt that some initiatives could be lost since they require and authority of a certain minimum size to carry them out. There was concern over the future of bursary provision by small authorities. There was also concern about the provision of specialist advisory services in small authorities.

Some of these findings will now be discussed in greater detail.

Representation on College Boards of Management

Before the implementation of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, regional councillors were represented on the college councils of all Scottish further education colleges. This study has shown that just over half of the college boards of management, which took over from college councils, have a regional council representatives.

Some college principals were keen to stress that the councillors on their board were there in a personal capacity, rather than representing the regional council. This, of course, in strict legal terms is correct. Most members of the college council act in a personal capacity in that they are not delegates of certain interest groups. Certain specified groups do elect or appoint members to college boards. The students of the college, the teaching staff and the non teaching staff all elect one member each to the board. The Local Enterprise Company is entitled to have one representative on the college board of management.

Under the 1992 Act members of local authorities, members of staff of the college, or students of the college may not serve as the chairperson of the college board of management. Thus it appears that the members of the board who have some kind of democratic accountability, in that they have to face an electorate, are the very members of the board who may not hold the chair. The remaining members of the board were initially appointed by The Secretary of State for Scotland but as they retire, their replacements will be appointed by the remaining board members. One of the aims of the legislation was to increase the accountability of further education colleges to their local community. It appears that the local community has been viewed in a very restricted way. This is not to argue that employers are not legitimate stakeholders in the work of their local college. However they are not the only stakeholders. Nor do they have the democratic accountability that local regional or district councillors have.

College boards of management could be seen as one means that the principal and other senior college managers have of assessing the needs of the community and of coordinating provision with local schools and the local authority. This appears to be a reasonable view since one of the roles of the Board is to approve the college's development plan. Identifying community needs and coordinating provision with other agencies clearly appear to be strategic activities. However college principals with whom this point was raised did not see this role for head teacher or local authority representatives on their boards of management.

Colleges appear to attempt to identify needs through market research. They do appear to consult widely in the communities that they serve and have a range of user liaison groups to assist them in meeting the needs of different client groups. Market research however is not inherently a democratic process. It can result in the the most vocal or the most powerful benefiting most from the services. The aim of democracy is to allow all equal voice in accessing publicly provided services. The market aims to allocate services to those who have the resources to exchange for them. Attempting to introduce market structures to publicly provided services can result in a loss

of equity of provision.

College boards of management are undemocratic as presently constituted. It is unlikely that direct elections would provide a reasonable solution and indeed a regional councillor interviewed ruled this out. Turn outs for elections to local authorities is low. However the bias in favour of employer representatives could be addressed through legislation that changed the balance of membership of boards of management so that other important stakeholders had set rights of representation.

Currently 22 boards have a secondary school head teacher as a member. This did allow for some appreciation of the need for links across the two sectors. The main links with secondary schools is not through membership of the college board of management.

Forums for maintaining links

In three regions and one division of Strathclyde Region committees comprising members from further education colleges, schools and the regional directorate are operating. These committees have a wide strategic remit. For example in Tayside Region the committee involves the three college principals, a representative of the regional directorate (the Depute Director and an Assistant Director), a secondary head teacher representative, and a community education representative. The agenda has included the following;

- Bursaries
- GSVQs
- Link Courses
- Under sixteens attending college
- Youth Training/Skillseekers
- Higher Still
- Special Educational Needs.

This committee received good reports from three of the parties involved (community education were not surveyed as part of this research). One college principal reported that links are now better than prior to incorporation. Another indicated that the relationship with the Region has remained good and that the Assistant Director maintains links with FE colleges. The assistant director gave possible reasons for the continued good links. He suggested that he links are now mainly educational. The operational aspects of the former relationship that caused problems such as administration, personnel and finance are now gone. Also the Region had a definite strategy not to sever links with colleges. The secondary head teacher on the committee also felt that links had improved. He felt that colleges were now freer and less formal. The tone of the liaison meetings had lightened.

Problem areas were also identified by most of the respondents. Both the Assistant Director and the college principals identified bursaries as a source of friction. The colleges are looking for more flexibility and the Region are cautious about extending the bursary provision to new areas. Two college principals would have liked to be able to communicate directly to the parents of school pupils but found it difficult to get access to address lists. One college principal was concerned about the number of adults in secondary schools and the number of pupils staying on at school particularly after enrolling for college courses. He pointed out that the evidence pointed to parental rather than school pressure on this latter issue.

It is noticeable that all of these negative points are about the content rather than the process of the regional committee. These are issues that can be and presumably are discussed in the committee. Thus issues that could cause friction and break down cooperation between colleges schools and the

region have a forum in which they can be discussed and resolved.

Tayside Region ceases to exist after April 1996 and it is unlikely that the committee will continue in its current state. It is to be hoped that the three successor authorities will institute similar arrangements. Only one of the other three authorities with a similar committee is going to exist with similar boundaries after local government reorganisation.

In other regions or divisions committees with relatively limited and specific remits provide a forum for college staff, school staff and regional officials to discuss educational matters. TVEI resulted in committees being set up a most education authorities to coordinate activities. One initiative that has grown out of TVEI and looks as though it will continue after TVEI funding ceases is the school based access programme, or as it is known in other authorities, the guaranteed entrance scheme. Examples of this type of scheme were found in the Dunbarton and Renfrew Divisions of Strathclyde, and in Central, Tayside, and Dumfries and Galloway Regions. Under such schemes, school based pupils undertake a group of modules previously agreed with the local college. If they successfully complete these modules in school then they are guaranteed progression onto named courses in the college. In some cases the guarantee is that they will be interviewed for the the college course.

Such programmes require regular meetings between school and college staff. It is estimated that around 20% of the age cohort could be involved in such programmes. These programmes benefit both types of institution since they are non competitive. They result in a win - win outcome. The school retains the pupils until they are 17 or 18. The college has a good chance of having the pupils progress into their HNC or HND courses. The pupils, for whom a full programme of highers may not have been an appropriate option, have an alternative route into higher education. In many ways programmes, such as those described above, meet the objectives that form the basis of Higher Still. It is to be hoped that the Higher Still framework will disseminate such practices more widely throughout Scotland.

A further TVEI led initiative that involves close cooperation between schools and colleges has been the occupational taster days organised in colleges for school pupils. In some areas this initiative has involved the whole S3 or S4 cohort. Pupils are given a list of occupational areas from which they have to choose one that especially interests them. They then have the opportunity to spend a day in the college involved in activities connected with that occupation.

One concern is that such arrangements may cease as TVEI funding is now coming to an end. There were no such concerns expressed in either schools or colleges. The arrangement described above have become an established part of the curriculum in both schools and colleges. College based School Liaison Officers, who were funded by TVEI money, have become established within the colleges with colleges recognising the important role they have in marketing college services to schools and their pupils. Funding, however, is an important issue. At the moment there is no charge made to schools for the use of college services. Whilst colleges were funded primarily on a historic basis this was not a problem. As funding moves increasingly to formulae, provision for school pupils could be under threat since the government is not going to double fund provision. There was no issue to be addressed when both sectors were under education authority control.

Other committees that involve education authority, college and school personnel attempted to coordinate European funding applications and coordinated aspects of local economic development.

There was little evidence of competition between schools and colleges for 16 to 18 year old fulltime students. Rather the concentration appear to be on building and maintaining bridges and ladders to allow smooth progression from one sector to the other at an appropriate point for the pupil/student. Cooperation was far more in evidence than competition. The main focus was on the

curriculum. Schools retain the vast majority of the age group, generally between 75 and 80 per cent although one school reported that 90% of its intake at S1 stayed on for S5 and 70% for S6.

The case studies in the next chapter provide more details of links between colleges, schools and regions.

Main Strategic Issues

The twelve interview respondents identified forty strategic issues affecting post compulsory education. Eighteen of these responses were concerned with the curriculum. Curricular coherence when moving from one sector to another, articulation, continuity and change, and clarity and coherence formed one set of responses related to the curriculum. As can be seen from the previous section, this is an area where some progress has been made in some locations. Another set of responses relating to the curriculum focused on specific qualifications and on curriculum change. Higher Still, GSVQs, SVQs, Skillseekers and Records of Achievement featured in these responses. The final set of responses on the curriculum were to do with the education/training divide, the balance between general and vocational education, the change of emphasis of FE from a stepping stone into higher education to training for employment and the need to do the best for each young person in terms of an appropriate curriculum.

Eleven of the responses were on institutional management. Marketing of courses, survival, links with other institutions, balancing the books, resourcing small units, quality, and auditing links were all mentioned as being strategic issues requiring attention.

Three of the respondents mentioned bursaries or student financial support as a strategic issue (three others mentioned it as a difficulty in response to another question). As a strategic issue bursaries was seen to be a central government problem. It was felt that the squeeze on education authority budget limited their options. There were some complaints about the manner in which some regions operated the bursary system.

Impact of Local Government Reorganisation

Both college and authority respondents saw potential benefits from local government reorganisation. On college principal indicated the local government reorganisation provided it with an opportunity to set up a new relationship with the unitary authority which was based on the previous District Council boundaries. The Regional Council had, in the past, discouraged links. Since incorporation, a number of links with the District Council had been established. The college was involved in an urban regeneration programme with the District Council. The District Council was helping to provide residences for students in the college undertaking higher level courses and was interested in SVQ courses. Two other college principals indicated that they felt that their colleges may gain a higher profile with the new authorities since they would become the only college within the authority's boundaries. In one college it was felt that no change would take place since the new authority was based on the boundaries of the old regional council. A further college principal reported that his college already has to deal with a number of authorities and that it is therefore prepared for the situation after April 1996.

The same college principal felt that colleges were a stable element during the changeover to the new authorities and that the authorities may turn to the college for assistance. This was echoed by one respondent from the local authority who felt that the college could have a key role in driving the School Based Access programme during the changeover.

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A number of concerns were also expressed about the situation following local government reorganisation. In two regions concerns were expressed about the loss of regional initiatives which rely on the economies of scale which can only be provided in a large authority. For example, support for pupils with special educational needs, targeted planning of staff and curriculum development, specialist, subject based advisory services, including, in one Region, a post compulsory adviser, could all be lost. There was also concern from both colleges and regional council officials that the administration of bursaries would become more complex, particularly if cross border transfers were required.

All of the above are of necessity speculative since the new councils do not take full office until April 1996.

5. Case Studies

In this chapter two case studies are presented based on evidence gained from the research.

Case Study 1 - Falkirk College and Associated Schools

Falkirk College has links with all of the secondary schools in Central Region. Most of the schools also have good links with Clackmannan College, which is the other further education college in the Region. For the purposes of this investigation, the researchers conducted interviews in Falkirk College and in six secondary schools.

The interviews in the college and in four of the schools were carried out by two researchers. Both researchers made notes during the interviews. These notes were written up by both interviewers in terms of the key areas of research. The two sets of notes were written up into a single report of each interview. It was hoped that this process would yield as accurate data as possible. In the other two schools the interviews were conducted by a single interviewer. A group interview was held in the college with six members of staff present. Senior staff in all six secondary schools were interviewed individually. The following descriptive material was drawn from the interviews.

Formal and informal links between college and schools

Currently most of the liaison is operated through the TVEI set up. There is a formal Steering Group comprising depute principals from the two FE colleges within the education authority, the authority's TVEI coordinator, a school depute head teacher, a representative from the careers service, and the two college TVEI coordinators. There were strong expressions of personal support for the work of the TVEI coordinators and concern expressed for the future when TVEI funding support is no longer available. It was indicated that the college sees this work as important enough to continue funding the role of the coordinators, at least in the near future.

The guidance coordinators from the two colleges sit on the Authority's Curriculum Development Committee. This is largely a secondary sector committee on which head teachers or their representatives sit. The agenda has recently focused on GSVQs.

The key liaison takes place through direct links between the college TVEI coordinator and the head teachers of all the secondary schools in the authority. This as seen by both college and school staff interviewed as the most effective link.

The depute head teacher of one of the schools is on an HND course board in the college. One school assistant head teacher suggested that he would like to see more links between subject heads in the school and their equivalents in the college. Another school respondent indicated that this already happened between his school and the college. This school was advantageously placed in that it was located just fifteen minutes walk from the college.

Both school and college respondents indicated that the authority representatives on the formal committees described above frequently did not attend meetings. The impression was gained that the authority had a fairly hands off approach with respect to school college links. The regional assistant director interviewed indicated that the main links with the college are through the exchange of development plans and the involvement of the college's depute and assistant principals on the S5/S6 curriculum planning group.

Curricular Provision

Up until 1987/8 the college had a programme of LINK courses for school pupils. The college tried to put on meaningful programmes. They saw it as an opportunity to influence pupils; to let them see that college was different from school. Many programmes were aimed at the 'Christmas Leaver' for whom the schools had little provision. Some problems arose with this scheme. The college felt that some schools were unloading awkward pupils on the college. The schools main problems with this scheme (and others involving pupil attendance at college) were transport and timetabling difficulties. They also indicated that pupils felt more comfortable at school than in college.

The above programme catered mainly for the lower end of the ability range. There were also arrangements in place for the upper end of the ability range. In the early days of computers in education, the college ran courses for fifth and sixth year secondary pupils. These courses are no longer ran since schools are now equipped with their own computers. The college still runs specialist modules in physics and chemistry for fifth and sixth year pupils. The chemistry programme has involved over 100 pupils during the past two sessions.

There are very few other programmes offered in Falkirk College which involve large numbers of school pupils attending the college. In terms of both numbers and reported favourable impact on pupils, the work simulation programme is the most significant. Although it only involves either a day or half day in college, over 700 secondary school pupils took part in 1993/94. The S3 pupils get an opportunity to sample the kind of work undertaken in a wide range of occupations in the safe surroundings of the college.

A range of different opinions were expressed on GSVQs. Only one collaborative arrangement was in place to offer GSVQ level 1 with pupils attending both school and college. However, other schools in the survey had GSVQ level 1 delivered internally. There were plans in two schools to start GSVQ level 1 in the future. There were mixed feelings regarding GSVQ level 2. The two schools who were surveyed last indicated that they were waiting to see Central Region's reaction to Higher Still before committing themselves on GSVQ level 2. One school manager interviewed indicated that the access programme was more suitable for school pupils since it offered more choice. Two other schools had either started or would be starting negotiations with the college regarding GSVQ level 2.

The access programmes allow pupils to get entry qualifications for Higher National courses in the college by following certain modules in school. Entry is not guaranteed *de jure* in the scheme although it has been a *de facto* guarantee. It was felt by the schools involved in this scheme, that as more schools joined the scheme and given the capping of higher national courses in FE colleges even the *de facto* guarantee is likely to disappear.

There was quite a variation in provision for adults in the six schools surveyed. In one school around 100 adults attend school for both leisure and highers classes. Another school was involved in a very interesting community education project which initially started for women from a deprived area. This programme started in 1987 and has greatly expanded. It now involves both men and women returners. The other schools indicated that they had very few adult returners.

Effects of legislation

The Board of Management of the college has no elected member or official of the education authority, nor does it have a local secondary school head teacher. This was not the case either before the 1989 legislation was enacted nor in the period between 1991 and April 1st 1993 when there was authority representation.

The college personnel reported that the changes in the legislation had little effect on the links between schools and colleges. The only change mentioned was that the college is no longer a member of the authority's quality assurance mechanism for National Certificate module assessment. It now has responsibility for its own quality assurance mechanisms. While this was seen to be generally beneficial to the college, problems were foreseen in setting standards for jointly delivered GSVQ programmes. This problem was also expressed by one of the respondents from a school.

The schools felt that incorporation had led to the college becoming more sensitive in their relationship with schools. One school depute head teacher said that the school and college are working better than in the past in encouraging pupils to remain in school until an appropriate transition point. She felt that in the past, the college had tried to 'poach' pupils after S4. Another secondary assistant head teacher said that school-college relations had improved since incorporation of the college. He identified three factors which were responsible for improved school/college links. These were the TVEI initiative, the quality of the TVEI coordinators in the colleges, and incorporation of the college.

Benefits and difficulties in the links

Most of the difficulties identified were operational rather than curricular. Factors such as timetabling problems in trying to match students at school to college timetables, transport problems from schools outwith the town in which the college is located, the reluctance of some pupils to want to go to college and staff development are all problems that need to be addressed. One school respondent did suggest that if large number of 16 year olds started to leave school and go to college then the education authority may try to discourage links. At the moment however, the schools are benefiting from larger percentages of pupils staying on at school.

Case Study 2 - Tayside Region

Tayside Region provides a good example of an education authority that has continued to take an active interest in post compulsory education and in the work of FE colleges since incorporation. This case study is based on interviews held with the principals of two of the three FE colleges in the Region, the assistant director of education with responsibility for post compulsory education, a secondary head teacher, a regional councillor, and the school and community liaison officer for one of the colleges.

Strategy

The Region has recently produced a Post Compulsory Strategy Document which is intended to inform the three successor authorities that will take over from Tayside Regional Council in April 1996. This document focuses on the following, key, strategic issues:

- the curricular implications of Higher Still
- adults in secondary schools - currently adults are not well represented in the region's secondary schools
- Skillseekers - the Regional Council's Youth Training Unit sees some threats in this initiative
- careers service reorganisation
- Summer School Access Programme - this involves Tayside Regional Council, secondary

schools, the FE colleges, and the two universities in the Region in a scheme to encourage disadvantaged youngsters into higher education

* revised links with colleges

* Community Education Service

The Region currently funds a post compulsory advisor.

Links with Colleges

The Directorate has a definite strategy of maintaining links with the FE colleges. It hosts a meeting once per term comprising the three college principals, members of the Directorate, a representative of Tayside Rectors Association and a community education representative. The location of the meeting and the chair revolves. Recent agenda have included the following issues:

- Bursaries
- GSVQs
- Link Courses
- Under sixteens attending college
- Youth Training/Skillseekers
- Higher Still
- Special Educational Needs.

These meetings were viewed positively by all of the participants. "Full Agenda", "Open discussion", "Superb", " The three college principals are great guys, and very receptive", "Professional collaboration" were some of the phrases used to describe the meetings. Sadly, it is almost certain that these meetings will cease in their present format after April 1996.

There are also a number of other forums which involve the Region, schools and Colleges. The colleges are represented at assistant principal level on the Regional Curriculum Group which also includes members of the Directorate and advisors. This has mainly discussed national certificate modules and GSVQs. The colleges are also represented on the board of he Education Business Partnership, on the TVEI Area Planning Groups and in area groupings of head teachers with their local college with one grouping each in Angus, Dundee and Perth.

School/College Initiatives

The range of school/ college initiatives is very similar to those described in the Falkirk College case study described above. The colleges have appointed School Liaison Officers. The School and Community Liaison Officer in one of the colleges was appointed in April 1993. His remit is to maintain good relations with schools and to keep cohesive links with community education. He saw greater competition between the college and community education than between the college and schools.

The following initiatives were described:

* 'A day in the life of....' This is a work simulation/vocational taster programme for S3/S4 pupils. Four years ago, it involved 40 pupils. This increased to 300 pupils two years ago but fell back to 172 pupils last year. The shift of this programme into the Educational Business partnership was given as a reason for the drop in numbers participating.

- School link programme. This takes place one afternoon per week and allows school pupils to try out National Certificate Modules.

- GSVQ partnership. This allows guaranteed progression for pupils if the clusters are achieved.

- BP Student Tutoring Scheme. 30 students from the college act as tutors in 23 secondary and 7 primary schools.

- Rolling programme of Roadshows and Information Talks in schools, talking to teachers, parents and pupils about the services of the college.

The School and Community Liaison Officer for the college felt that it was important to have coordination at the education authority level to achieve effective results.

Effects of Incorporation

Both college and school respondents felt that relationships between the had improved since incorporation. The same sentiments were expressed about the relationship between the colleges and the Region. One college principal said that relationships were better than they used to be. He said that problems with the statutory consultation on development plans do not arise if there is good, regular dialogue.

The secondary school head teacher said that although it sounded like a paradox, relationships with the college have improved. The colleges were now freer and less formal. They now "take opportunities." He recognised that the sub text underlying the relationship is that the colleges are after students. However he felt that their whole tone has lightened.

The member of the directorate suggested that the relationship and dialogue with the college was now largely based on educational rather than operational issues. It was the operational issues such as finance, personnel and administration that caused much of the friction in the past. These functional issues are now the responsibility of the colleges or the Scottish Office. The one issue that continues to cause friction between the colleges and the Region is a financial issue. This is the problem of administration of bursaries.

Areas of Friction

Some issues were identified as causing concern although none to the extent that they harmed the good working relationship that the colleges, schools and the Region have. The administration of bursaries was one issue that has already been discussed. The colleges are looking for more flexibility so that new provision can be funded for students. The Region is more cautious. Currently the policy is that it will fully fund historical provision

One college felt that the options available in the college were not fully explained by the schools careers service. The member of the directorate felt that both schools and colleges felt that they may be better placed to offer career progression for pupils. Two college principals felt that they would like to get direct access to parents of pupils and were currently unable to get address lists from either the schools or the Region.

Overall however the relationships were probably best described as professional collaboration.

6. Conclusions

I approached this topic out of a concern that legislative changes could have resulted in great deal of distrust and competition between secondary schools and FE colleges in the post- incorporation era. In fact, in the sample surveyed, there was a great deal of co-operation and trust between the schools and the colleges. There was a general impression in the schools that relationship with the colleges had improved since incorporation and a more mature and less threatening relationship had been established. Thus it appears that the government's intentions rather than the fears have been shown to came to pass. However, although the outcomes may satisfy the government, these outcomes may not have been achieved using the mechanism the government intended. FEU suggests that one of the disadvantages of partnerships between FE colleges and other institutions is a 'denial of free market and role of enterprise'.[21] It is this naive view of the market and of enterprise that has been refuted by the findings of this research. A competitive environment does not necessarily yield competition between institutions.

My research indicates that schools and colleges are operating in a very sophisticated way in the educational market. Rather than adopting a simplistic, competitive approach towards other institutions, they are forming strategic alliances with other institutions from which both parties can benefit . Schools have access to pupils which colleges want in the form of future clients and colleges have staff and physical resources that schools desire for the enhanced educational experience of their pupils. The provision of a worthwhile experience and easy transition from school to college seemed to underpin the various programmes in both the schools and the FE college. There may also be further explanations. At the moment both schools and colleges are funded though the TVEI programme to provide certain experiences for 14 to 18 year old pupils. Much of the activity reported by respondents was organised through TVEI. This funding will dry up over the next two years. However these processes of cooperation are well embedded in the system and the intention appears to be to keep them in operation.

Perhaps another reason that there has not been the outright competition for sixteen to eighteen year olds in Scotland is that there is no history of pupils leaving school at sixteen to undertake academic courses at college. This is further underwritten by the absence of sixth form colleges or tertiary colleges in Scotland. Local authority schools had no major competitors for sixteen to eighteen year old pupils. It has also been suggested that the one year higher encouraged pupils to remain in school since they were not committing themselves to a further two years of school education at sixteen.

A number of school and college representatives who were interviewed said that their relationship post incorporation was better than that they enjoyed previously. This appears to be paradoxical, however it may be that when both school and colleges were under education authority control, they saw themselves in competition for scarce regional funds. Now that they have separate paymasters, this element of competition has been removed.

The result of this lack of direct competition has been the evolution of a system in which the education of sixteen to eighteen year olds is largely provided by secondary schools. FE colleges provide an end on experience for students who do not wish to go to university. They also cooperate with the schools in providing experiences for school based pupils which enhance the school delivered programmes. The main links between schools and colleges are designed to ease the transition for students moving from one sector to the other.

It is this focus that has helped schools and colleges in Scotland to avoid the conflict that has happened elsewhere. Schools and colleges are working together with the interests of the students as the main element of dialogue. By doing so they are operating in their own best interests. It is an

example of vertical integration of the education service.

This is not to say that the potential for conflict does not exist. Colleges are being excluded from further expansion into the higher education market, at least temporarily by the capping of their numbers on Higher National courses. If this market became permanently closed, they may need to look to the sixteen and seventeen year olds. This would put them into direct competition with the schools. This would be regrettable since the current arrangements do seem to work to everyone's benefit. What is beyond doubt is that recently expressed fears that schools and colleges cannot work together in delivering an appropriate curriculum for sixteen and seventeen year olds are unfounded. Higher Still should not fail because it requires cooperation between schools and colleges. Indeed it appears that Higher Still will largely be drawing on current best practice.

In the main, the above arrangements have been worked out bilaterally by the colleges and schools. The regional education authorities have had only a limited involvement. However, this research has shown that there is still a role for education authorities in the strategic planning of post compulsory education. By drawing together schools, colleges and, in some cases community education, education authorities can help to foster good relationships and provide forum where issues of common concern can be addressed. The new unitary authorities will have a lot of work ahead of them putting into place their arrangements for their statutory duties in education. Perhaps however they can spare some time to think about what they can do to provide leadership in post compulsory education. This is particularly important for economic development.

The issue of bursaries for students and pupil following non advanced courses needs to be addressed. It is an issue which only central government can effectively rectify. As suggested earlier in this report it seems to be anomalous that unemployment benefits are demand driven whilst bursaries are cash limited. By having to administer bursaries, education authorities are carrying the can for centrally imposed cash restrictions which are souring their relationships with both colleges and prospective students.

A further issue that requires central government review is the composition of college boards of management. Again it appears anomalous that local enterprise companies, which have no direct local, democratic accountability, have right to a place on college boards of management, yet the locally accountable education authority has no such right. Now that District and Regional Councils have been replaced by unitary authorities it should be possible to change the regulations to set aside a place for at least one local councillor on the college board of management. This would recognise the role of the unitary authorities in both education and local economic development.

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Bridges or Battlements?

This report is the result of a research project which arose out of a concern that conflictual, competitive relationships between further education colleges, schools and education authorities would arise as a result of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992. This Act removed further education colleges from education authority control and placed them under the operational control of individual Boards of Management. The majority of schools in Scotland remain under the control of education authorities. There is therefore, some potential for conflictual competition since there is an overlap in the client groups for the upper secondary and further education colleges.

However there was no evidence of conflict between schools and further education colleges. In fact there was little evidence of competition. Relationships between schools and colleges appear to be based on cooperation and collaboration. Whilst there was a general feeling that relationships between colleges and education authorities had weakened, they still talk to each other. Links are still maintained between colleges and eduaction authorities.

In other words, the current relationships between colleges, schools, and education authorities are much more about building bridges than about manning the battlements.

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